



Flathead National Forest

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News Release

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Flathead National Forest receives 20,000 comments on revising the Forest Plan and Amending for the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy

KALISPELL, MONTANA – July 17, 2015

The Flathead National Forest received more than 20,000 comments on its proposal for revising its land and resource management plan (forest plan). Comments on the proposal to amend the Helena, Kootenai, Lewis and Clark, and Lolo National Forest plans to integrate the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy were also sought during the 70 day comment period that ended May 15.

The Flathead National Forest is preparing a single environmental impact statement for both the revised forest plan and the grizzly bear amendments.

Forest Supervisor Chip Weber commented that, "The public response has been excellent; we received a lot of constructive comments that we are giving serious consideration to in order to improve our initial proposal as well as to develop some alternatives that will be able to display the range of issues expressed throughout the comment period."

The majority of the comments received were form letters or petitions that were either identical in content or substantially similar. Approximately 370 unique comments came from individuals or commercial interests. Seven letters were from public agencies and approximately 30 letters came from non-profit organizations.

"The Flathead National Forest plan revision team has reviewed all the comments," said Weber. "Four significant issues were identified and will be used to frame alternatives for the revised forest plan." They are:

- 1) Vegetation management, timber production, and fire;

- 2) Habitat for wildlife and fish;
- 3) Access and recreation; and
- 4) Recommended wilderness.

The planning team will be using these issues and public comments to refine the proposed action and build alternatives. Once the analysis is completed, a draft environmental impact statement will be issued. The Forest Service plans to have this document available by January 2016. Once the draft environmental impact statement is issued there will be a 90-day comment period.

The Flathead National Forest plan revision website provides additional information about the forest plan revision planning process, including links to the proposed action for the revised forest plan located at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/flathead/fpr. The amendment component of the proposed action can be found at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/flathead/gbamend. Links to a reading room containing all comments, the 2012 planning rule and, the draft NCDE Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy can be found on these websites as well.

For further information about the project, contact Joe Krueger, Forest Planner, Flathead National Forest, 650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, Montana 59901, (406) 758-5243, or at flatheadplanrevision@fs.fed.us.

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